



VINDICATOR

The Newsletter of Metagaming Games and Science Fiction & Fantasy Boardgames

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EDITORIAL — RUMORS OF IMPENDING DEATH

by Michael Friend

There has been much wailing, hand wringing, finger pointing and gnashing of teeth lately over a couple seemingly apocalyptic events within the hobby over the past year. A good deal of ink has been spilled in the press and thousands of bytes wasted on the Internet about these otherwise normal business decisions that have given the movers, shakers and pundits within the hobby needless cause to predict the agonizing death (or at least drastic reduction) of wargaming. I am referring, of course, to the decision of Game Designers' Workshop to finally shut down its business and that of The Gamers Inc. to revert primarily to mail order distribution.

Never mind the fact that most GDW products have been returned to their designers and have already found new publishers to keep them in print, or that The Gamers is still willing to special order games for retailers when asked. Nay, announce the doomsayers, the hobby is going to collapse soon. According to their implausible scenario, GDW was a major force in the hobby for many years and their input will be sorely missed; while The Gamers' decision to go to direct mail will influence other game companies to do the same thing, thus spelling the eventual end of the local retail hobby shop. Supposedly less and less new games will be available to stock the shelves (because they'll be sold by mail order instead) and those few games that will be displayed will sell for higher and higher prices causing the gamers to shun these products and the stores as well. And if less games are sold and the local shops wither away, publishers will

decide that it's no longer economically feasible to publish games and thus quit publishing entirely. Therefore the end of the hobby is nigh.

That's quite an interesting possible chain of events, but I think a reality check is in order here. Wargamers, like most people, seem to have a short memory. I distinctly remember a similar gloom and doom situation that developed when SPI went out of business about fifteen years ago. They too had been one of the major publishers in the hobby and when they exited the scene a general panic ensued. Never mind the fact that most of the SPI staff continued to design games for other companies (both old and new). This was the end, we were told. Sure, there was a slight slump in the hobby for awhile but we seem to have survived and become stronger because of it. Many hobbyists, for example, realized that they shouldn't be so dependent on the publishers for the well being of the hobby. It was up to them to keep the hobby going, whatever happened to the companies. But, we are assured, the situation is worse this time and the hobby will not last. Yeah, right. I really have to question the motives of people who make these dire predictions. Is this just wishful thinking (a death wish maybe?) or ugly scare tactics?

For the sake of argument let's accept the worse case scenario we've been force fed for the past year. What if every boardgame publisher (both major and minor) decided to shut down within a few months and stop producing games entirely? Would that spell the end of the hobby? Not really. Sure, the lack of new products displayed on retailers' shelves

would probably contribute to the problem of gaining new converts, but let's face it, if we have trouble introducing new people to the hobby then that's our personal problem, not the game publishers' fault. Local clubs would continue to meet at their regular times while isolated gamers could (if they haven't already) learn to play solo. Local, regional and even national conventions could still be held (minus the dealers, of course), this time with the main emphasis on tournament play. My point is that the hobby does not (or at least should not) rise and fall on the business and marketing decisions of the game publishers. Wargaming should be consumer driven rather than company driven.

Let's face it guys, gamers are a greedy lot. Most of us act like immature children every time a new game is announced or released, stumbling all over ourselves to place pre-publication orders or trying to be the first to snatch the box off the shelf. Very rarely are we willing to stand back and ask, do I really *need* this game or do I just *want* it to add to my trophy collection? If the game is lucky it will actually be played a couple times before being relegated to the back of the closet after the player spots an advertisement for yet another new game. And so the cycle continues. Players with this type of mentality would most likely go into withdrawal if the publishers decided to cut back production or quit the business entirely. Obviously what is needed is a more reasoned and mature approach to the current problem.

Though the miniatures branch of the hobby can trace its roots back almost a century with the publication of H. G. Wells' *Little Wars*, the board game branch is much younger, roughly thirty-five plus years. But in those short decades literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of historical, science fiction and fantasy board games have been printed and distributed around the world. The vast majority of those games have been out-of-print for many years, but that doesn't mean that they should be ignored and forgotten. Most gamers who have been in the hobby for any length of time (one to two decades or more) have usually

amassed a collection of anywhere from three hundred to five hundred or more games, including both boxed games and magazine games. My personal collection is much smaller than that, hovering around one hundred-forty games, and roughly two thirds of those are science fiction games. I can't speak for any other hobbyists, but I'll have to admit that the majority of games in my collection have never been played, and those few that have been played were spread out on the table no more than maybe half a dozen times. I ask you now, if even I haven't made the effort to play most of my games, why should it matter to me if new game production is drastically reduced or curtailed altogether? Wouldn't it be realistic to first attempt to play the games I already own rather than worry about the production of new games?

I'm willing to make a bet with any other gamer around the world. Can you look me straight in the eye and tell me truthfully that you have completely played out and become totally bored with every single board game in your collection, whether it was science fiction, historical or whatever? *Are you so thoroughly familiar with every game you own that you know every strategy by heart, you have used every tactic, you recognize and can routinely counter every situation that has arisen in all your playing sessions so that the games have become second nature to you and you've become so adept at playing them that you'd easily win every time you played?* I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT TO BE TRUE! Probably the closest you may have come to that ideal are the handful of personal favorites that you insist on playing as often as possible, but I bet even then that you haven't played out all the strategic and tactical possibilities of those few games.

If this is true with most gamers (as I'm sure it is) then we have no reason whatsoever to be concerned if a group of publishers change their marketing plans, reduce their output or go out of business entirely. Let them make their decisions while the rest of us pursue our hobby. For the past few years science fiction board gaming has had to contend with this annoying situation. After Metagaming shut down in the early

1980s the other companies that had followed in their footsteps gradually began to publish fewer and fewer SF board games until the main emphasis of SF gaming eventually shifted to RPGs, leaving SF board gamers scrambling for an occasional new release every few years. A few new SF board games have been published recently, but not in the same quantity as during the 1970s. If this is a new trend then I applaud the various publishers for their courage, but until I see more commitment from others I won't assume the deluge has started just yet.

Until we begin to see a greater variety of science fiction games on the market (in both retail and mail order marketing) may I respectfully suggest that we instead concentrate on becoming experts with the games already extant in our collections? Let's continue playing these old, out-of-print games until we've mastered every strategy and every tactic and every situation that they present. Then, when we finally get bored and tired with them, we can retire them with the honor they deserve and legitimately start searching for new games to buy.

This exhortation is equally applicable for historical games too! In the 1960s Avalon Hill was the main wargame publisher and gamers considered themselves lucky if they got two new games a year. In many ways that small but steady production level allowed the hobby to mature very quickly, because gamers spent more time actually playing games and devising strategies than waiting for the next release. When other companies finally entered the scene and started flooding the market, it became very difficult, if not impossible, to properly devote enough time to study and develop strategies for each game before the next release hit the shelves. As I look back over the hoopla of the past year I really doubt that the actions of GDW and The Gamers will have any major negative effect on the hobby. In fact I hope it will make gamers realize that they have a vast heritage of old games (both historical and science fiction) that they can fall back on.

— continued on page 10

Vindicator Review:

GAMEFIX MAGAZINE/CRISIS 2000

by Mark Wegierski

Magazine: GAMEFIX: The Forum of Ideas (Sacramento, Game Publications Group) No. 2 (November 1994)

Game: *Crisis 2000: Insurrection in the United States!* (enclosed in GAMEFIX)

The subtitle "The Forum of Ideas" was dropped in issues 8 and 9; the publication was renamed **COMPETITIVE EDGE** starting with issue 10. The name and address of the publisher changed to the following with issue 10:

One Small Step
9416 Mira Del Rio
Sacramento, California 95827

Eleven issues have appeared so far; issue 12 is extremely delayed, not a good sign for the company or the hobby.

GAMEFIX markets itself as producing "wargames for people who don't like wargames". The conflict simulation games they offer with every issue of their magazine are deliberately designed to be simple to play (at least by wargame standards) and to be relatively quick and easy to finish (often less than an hour). GAMEFIX also intends to feature non-military games dealing with mountain-climbing, various major league sports, etc.

In tune with the aimed-for simplicity, *Crisis 2000* has a map of the U.S. consisting of fourteen regions in total. They are of three types—metroplex, developed and wilderness. (The numerous black dots representing cities and military bases play no role in the actual game.) There are also three boxes on the map representing U.S. overseas deployment areas. The game has a hundred counters, of which fifty-five represent military and political forces—"units", seventeen represent "infrastructures" and thirty-seven are "crisis" markers used to augment the strength of one's forces in different ways.

There are two notable things about the units/infrastructure counters—first of all, they are printed on both sides, showing the same formation (e.g. High Tech Arms division) in different colors, on different sides of the counter. This

economizing measure is useful in terms of indicating immediate "defections" of military and political units as well as infrastructures to the other side, which is one of the main aspects of so-called "Data Conflict". Secondly, the units have two values apart from their movement allowance, their rating for "Data Conflict" and for "Armed Conflict". There are special rules for certain units, e.g. the "Cybernauts" usually cannot be attacked through "Armed Conflict", as they are presumed to be clandestine, while federal police forces can in some circumstances use their higher "Armed Conflict" rating against the "Cybernauts". Ultimately, however, the game often simply amounts to "move in with your units and try to bash your opponent", although the use of randomly drawn "Crisis" markers to weaken your opponent or augment your own offensive, is critical to success. (The three numbers on a typical Crisis marker represent its conflict augmentation values when committed to metroplex, developed or wilderness regions, respectively, for Data or Armed Conflict.) The more combat and political forces that are committed to a given battle, the greater the chance of "Collateral Damage", which impacts on the winner of the battle as well.

The magazine's background material to the game is highly interesting (pp. 6-8, 22-24), although written from a very libertarian slant. It is a good beginning for speculations about possible future civil conflicts in the U.S., and for future analysis of the sociopolitical impact of the Internet. Game designer Joe Miranda points to the "Clipper Chip" controversy—the attempt to create a microchip standard for all email encryption, that would also allow for the decryption of all electronic messages through special "keys" held by government agencies. (The current "standard" is a plethora of commercially available encryption programs, which may often be virtually inaccessible to government monitoring.) Miranda also writes about Operation Sun Devil, launched by the Secret Service in 1990. Among the targets was a gaming company, Steve Jackson Games, whose "cyberpunk" role playing game—although dealing with fictional hardware and software—was considered to be so close to verisimilitude as to constitute a "how-to" guide. The company was practically driven into bankruptcy as all its computer equipment and files contained therein were impounded. One of the results of Operation Sun Devil was the formation of the Elec-

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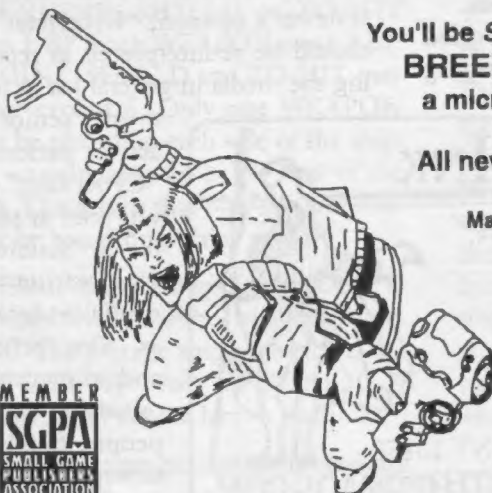
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tronic Frontier Foundation, which is one of the chief groups fighting for complete freedom of communication on the Internet. (Although it itself has recently been criticized by more radical groups for neglecting its mission.)

The magazine also mentions a provocative article published in the Winter 1992-93 issue of *PARAMETERS*, the U.S. Army War College's journal, by U.S. Air Force Lt. Colonel Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., entitled, "The Origins of the American Military Coup of 2012." The article's main purpose to be to critique the very deep cuts to the U.S. military, but especially to protest the increasing use of the U.S. armed forces for political ends, both at home and abroad. In the future, both these trends are seen as sapping U.S. morale and combat effectiveness, to the point where a major U.S. defeat in the Persian Gulf area causes the military to turn against its inept political masters, supposedly cheered on by much of the civilian sector.

Among the eclectic mixture of other references listed are James Burnham's political classic, *The Managerial Revolution*, and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The game offers seven scenarios, with differing force mixes for the two opposing players (unlike many political games like *Diplomacy*, this is strictly a two-player game, although add-ons might become available in the future).

The 7 main scenarios (p. 20) are:

- **Coup 2001:** The military attempts to seize power from a corrupt civilian government.
- **Culture Wars:** The country splits wide open between Cyber-Futurists and Family Values Traditionalists.
- **UN Occupation:** The United Nations dispatches a peacekeeping

force to suppress the outlawed American firearms, tobacco and rogue computer industries.

- **War on Freedom:** The government makes a preemptive strike to clamp down on crime, local secessionist movements, unwed mothers, computer hackers and other threats to the national security.
- **Generation X:** Everybody against the younger generation! [or should that be, the younger generation against everybody else! – reviewer]
- **Anarchy in the USA:** Various groups unite to fight for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
- **Civil War II:** Fed up with the Feds, state and local governments declare independence, backed by their National Guards and unofficial local militias.

In *GAMEFIX* No. 9 (p. 26) a further scenario is added, "The Militia War":

- The trend of the 1990s was toward forming local militias to protect the citizenry from real or imagined threats from criminals and government interference. By the year 2000, the Feds, deciding that the movement is too large and dangerous, launch an operation to disarm the militias.

Many of these scenarios are clearly rooted in a specifically American experience of the world. Although all of them point to identifiable social and political realities, the U.S. fortunately seems rather distant from any of these metamorphosing into an actual "shooting" civil war.

One questionable aspect of the game would be what could be seen as its HUGE overrating of the impact of "the Cybernauts" and Internet. In the reviewer's opinion, "Cybernaut" units should be re-interpreted as representing the media in general (or at least its

most senior and activist persons). If a "Cybernaut" unit was seen as standing for a massive agglomeration of media leaders, such as film producers and directors, key television network people, hundreds of newspaper, book or

magazine publishers, and the best known investigative journalists, as well as the Internet activists themselves, then such a projection of power would seem more warranted.

Another game inaccuracy, in the reviewer's opinion, is the zero ratings of military units in "Data Conflict". While the military might find it difficult to *initiate* political struggle, they are certainly among the most cohesive groups in society. Propaganda *might* degrade a military unit somewhat, but never to the point where it comes over to another side, with fully intact combat and movement capabilities. It would probably "break" completely before changing sides. The strengths of irregular fighting formations also seem rather overvalued in relation to disciplined, cohesive military units with heavy equipment.

Nevertheless, the designer is to be highly commended for adding a touch of panache and current politics to his game and magazine issue.

GAMEFIX/COMPETITIVE EDGE
Issue Topics/Games, 1994–1996:

- #1: *Ancients:* Thapsos and Alexandria (two battles of Julius Caesar)
- #2: *Crisis 2000:* Insurrection in the United States!
- #3: *Chicken of the Sea:* Naval Warfare During the Punic Wars (Rome vs. Carthage)
- #4: *Bombs Away!* The Air War Over Europe (card-based game)
- #5: *Winceby:* Battle of the English Civil War (Royalists & Roundheads system)
- #6: *Redline Korea:* Potential Conflict in Korea
- #7: *The BIG One:* The War in Europe, 1939–1945
- #8: *Greenline Chechnya:* The Current Conflict in Chechnya
- #9: *Among Nations:* International Intrigue in the Modern World (card-based game of current international diplomacy)
- #10: *Edson's Ridge:* World War II Battle for Guadalcanal
- #11: *Cybernaut:* The Duel for Cyberspace

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MINIMAL SPACE COMBAT

a very simple space combat game

timothy swenson

Copyright 1996 by Timothy Swenson
(This game is freeware and may be distributed freely.)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The premise behind this game is this: what is the simplest playable game possible to game tactical space combat. The game must make some reasonable attempt to come close to simulating space combat and not just the simplest possible game. The emphasis of this game is fast and easy. Playability is given more consideration than realism. There is no consideration for expansion of these rules, because then it would not be minimal. Use the game for those times when you want a quick and dirty space combat game or for introducing someone new to gaming. If you want to go beyond this minimal game, there are other Freeware games that can do it.

So here it is, enjoy it and blast each other to bits.

2.0 SHIPS

Ships are comprised of the following elements:

ENGINE: Determines the maximum Speed that a ship may travel.

SHIELDS: Determines the amount of damage a ship may take before being destroyed.

TO-HIT: The odds of a ship hitting another ship.

WEAPONS: The list of weapons a ship has and their firing arc.

Each ship has six sides. They are: Front (F), Front Left (FL), Front Right (FR), Rear Left (RL), Rear Right (RR) and Rear (R). See the Facing/Firing Arc Chart below for a diagram.

Ship turn records: During the game, damage, speed and movement is tracked for each ship using Ship Turn Record sheets. At the beginning of the game, the ship's stats are entered on the Ship Turn Record. If a ship does not have a weapon on a particular side, fill in that oval. If a ship has ENGINE 4 then all but four of the ovals are filled in. The rest of the ovals are filled in when the ship takes damage.

3.0 SHIP DESIGN

Each ship is designed using a number of Build Points (BPs) to spend on the various elements of the ship. Each unit of ENGINE, SHIELD or TO-HIT costs 1 BP. Each WEAPON costs 2 BP. ENGINE, SHIELD and TO-HIT may never exceed 5. Only one WEAPON may be placed on each side of the ship. No weapons may go in the Rear of the ship. This means that only five weapons may be bought per ship.

Different sizes of ships can be built, it depends on the number of Build Points used. The average ship costs about 15 BPs. Other BP values are 10 and 20. A ship of 25 BPs is the largest possible.

Below are some example ship designs using 15 BPs.

	Ship 1	Ship 2	Ship 3
ENGINE	3	2	4
SHIELDS	3	4	4
TO-HIT	3	3	5
WEAPONS	F, FL FR	F, FL FR	F

4.0 TURN SEQUENCE

Turns are comprised of the following phases:

- Move Orders Phase
- Movement Phase
- Initiative Roll
- Player 1 Combat Phase
- Player 2 Combat Phase

Before combat takes place both players roll a die for initiative. The player with the highest die roll becomes player 1 for the Combat phases. Ties are re-rolled.

5.0 SETUP

The setup of the game is entirely up to the players. How many ships, what type of ships (how many BPs each), the starting location of the ships and the victory conditions are for the players to decide. It is recommended that players first start off with a small number of ships and gradually build up over subsequent games. The most obvious victory condition is to see who can destroy whom.

6.0 MOVEMENT

Ship Movement Orders: All movement is plotted before any movement takes place. These Movement Orders are written on the Ship Turn Record sheet during the Move Orders Phase. Movement Orders are written down like "2L1". This means to move two hexes forward, turn one hexside to the left, then move one hex forward.

SPEED is how fast the ship is currently travelling. Speed may never exceed the current **ENGINE** rating. Ships start out the game at any Speed less than or equal to the **ENGINE** rating. Speed is written on the Ship Turn Record during the Move Orders Phase.

Moving a Ship: Ships may either move forward, turn left (one hexside) or turn right (one hexside). Each one of these movements costs 1 **SPEED**. Ships may not turn twice in a row, but must move at least one hex forward between turns. A ship must expend all of its Speed in each turn, either by moving forward or turning.

Acceleration and Deceleration: Ships may accelerate or decelerate by 1 **SPEED** each turn. The new speed is written down in the Move Orders Phase.

Since all movement (direction and Speed) is plotted before any ships move, both players may move their ships at the same time.

7.0 COMBAT

Ships may fire on other ships when the following occurs: the target ship is within range of the firing ship, there is a clear line-of-sight between the ships, and the target ship is in the firing arc of one of the firing ship's weapons. See the Facing/Firing Arc Chart below to determine which arc the target ship is in. Each weapon on a ship may fire once per turn.

Range: All weapons have a normal range of 4 hexes. Ships may fire at 5 or 6 hexes, but with a -1 on the To-Hit Roll. Ships firing at 1 or 2 hexes fire with a +1 on the To-Hit Roll. Range 0 (same hex) is at +2 on the To-Hit Roll.

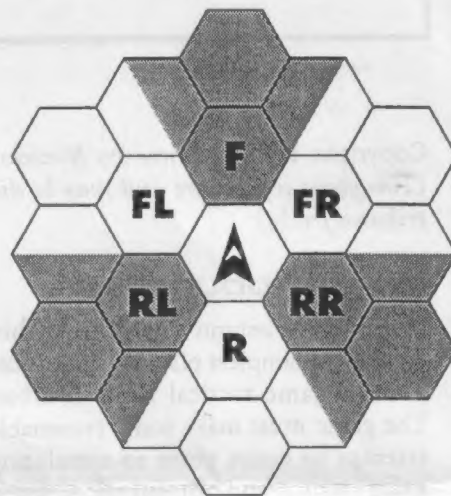
To-Hit Roll: After all of the above conditions have been met, roll 1d6 for each weapon firing. If the die roll is equal to or less than the **TO-HIT** of the firing ship (taking Range modifiers into effect), then the target ship has been hit.

Damage: Each weapon delivers one hit of damage to the targeted ship. Roll 1d6. On a roll of 1 - 4 mark off one

oval of **SHIELD**. On a roll of 5 mark off one oval of **ENGINE**. On a roll of 6 the **WEAPON** on that side of the targeted ship is destroyed. If there is no weapon on that side or the weapon is already destroyed, mark off one oval of **SHIELD**. If there is no **ENGINE** mark off one oval of **SHIELD**. All damage is applied immediately.

Destruction: Any ship with no more ovals of **SHIELDS** is considered destroyed.

FACING/ FIRING ARC CHART



Note: Notice that as you extend the firing arcs, some hexes will be in two firing arcs.

MINIMAL SHIP TURN RECORD

ship name: _____ to-hit: _____

engine: ○○○○○○ shield: ○○○○○○

weapons: F○ FL○ FR○ RL○ RR○

turn	speed	move	turn	speed	move
1			16		
2			17		
3			18		
4			19		
5			20		
6			21		
7			22		
8			23		
9			24		
10			25		
11			26		
12			27		
13			28		
14			29		
15			30		

MINIMAL SHIP TURN RECORD

ship name: _____ to-hit: _____

engine: ○○○○○○ shield: ○○○○○○

weapons: F○ FL○ FR○ RL○ RR○

turn	speed	move	turn	speed	move
1			16		
2			17		
3			18		
4			19		
5			20		
6			21		
7			22		
8			23		
9			24		
10			25		
11			26		
12			27		
13			28		
14			29		
15			30		

More Random Number Generation for PBM Games

by Michael Friend



Way back in the first issue I introduced the readership to a random number generation system using state lottery scratch tickets. The system works very nicely but its one disadvantage is that it costs money to buy the tickets (usually \$1.00 in most states) unless you're lucky enough to acquire used tickets from friends and acquaintances. I've recently found out about another such system that works just as well but is considerably cheaper.

The scratch ticket system is fairly old and so is the other system, but since I only recently discovered its existence and because I've never read about it in any other gaming publication except the one game in which it appeared, I'm assuming that it has been all but forgotten by most old gamers and is probably unknown to new gamers. Thus I've made it my mission to resurrect it.

Way back in STRATEGY & TACTICS #27 SPI published a game designed by Jim Dunnigan called *The Battle for France, 1940*. SPI later sold that game to Avalon Hill and the title was shortened to simply *France, 1940*. Though the game was originally printed twenty-five years ago, I've never seen or played it until I recently ordered a used copy from a second-hand game dealer. By today's sophisticated standards the rules are rather primitive but one item at the end of the rules folder caught my eye. I don't know whether it was included by SPI in the original edition or by Avalon Hill in their reprint, but somebody had written extensive notes for a very simple and elegant combat system for PBM play, which, as I read through it, I realized could be applied to practically every board game that utilized a standard combat results table. So, for those of you who either forgot this system or never learned about it, yet like to play games by mail (and this system can be used

just as easily for playing by e-mail too), I'll explain it and give an example of its use.

As I mentioned above, this system is a little cheaper than the scratch ticket system. The only expense involved is that of a couple extra stamps, because the system requires both players to simultaneously mail two items to each other on the same day of the week. The players should agree, before starting the game, what that simultaneous day should be. Any day of the week can be chosen but a good recommendation would be to make the mailing on every Monday, because that would give the phasing (or attacking) player all day Sunday to plan and write down his movement and attacks. If the players wish to have a more leisurely game they can do their mailings every other week, or in whatever time period suits them. My main point here is that a day and frequency for simultaneous mailings should be

Die Roll	Odds						
	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1
1	AE	AE	AR	AR	BR	DR	DR
2	AE	AR	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR
3	AR	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR	DE
4	AR	AR	EX	EX	DR	DR	DE
5	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR	DE	DE
6	AR	BR	DR	DR	DR	DE	DE

Chart 1: CRT before PBM modification

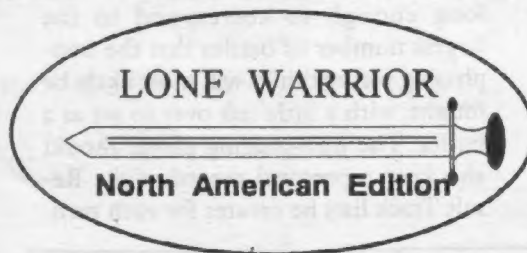
agreed on. If the players are playing by e-mail then they must also decide what hour and minute of the day they will post their messages to each other, making sure to take into account any time zone changes that may separate the players if they are playing across the country (in the US) or overseas (with other countries).

One other thing must be done before the game starts. A special addition must be made to the game's CRT. For purposes of this article and to keep from being accused of copyright infringement, I've created a small generic CRT to use as an example. That CRT is shown in Chart 1.

This particular CRT was designed to be used with a six-sided die (d6), but the system itself can be applied to any CRT with the same format, no matter how many or what type of dice are required. An alteration, similar to that which I will make to this CRT, must be made to the CRT from the particular game you expect to play by mail.

A series of columns, corresponding to the number of results in the DIE ROLL column, must now be added to the left of that DIE ROLL column. Avalon Hill calls these columns "Result Tracks", so I'll use that designation too. From left to right the Result Tracks are lettered

SOLO WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION



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PBM, continued

from "A" to "F". Each Track is then filled in, from top to bottom, with the die roll results from the CRT. As you fill in the Tracks you start each one with the next number down in the list, so that you eventually cycle through the list of die roll numbers. For example, the A column would read; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The B column would read; 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1. The C column would read; 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2. This continues until you reach the last column, F, which would read; 6, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. When finished our generic CRT will be altered to look like Chart 2 (next page).

If the CRT in your game uses 2d6 and has eleven results (rolls of from 2 to 12), then you would create eleven Result Track columns, lettered from A to K. If your CRT uses a d10 with ten results then you would create ten columns lettered A through J. Most standard CRTs usually don't require the use of more than 2d6 or a d10 or d12, so you usually won't have to create any more than twelve columns at the maximum. What I want to stress here is that this system can be used with CRTs that are formatted in the same manner as the above basic design. It doesn't matter what type of CRT is being used. It could be an odds-ratio, or attack strength or differential or whatever type of CRT, just so that it uses this familiar pattern. If you have a game with a CRT that doesn't use this pattern then you'll have to decide for yourself whether you can adapt this system to that game. Go ahead and experiment. Gamers are known for their propensity to tinker with games so here's your chance to indulge yourself.

Now that we've prepared the CRT for PBM (or PBeM) gaming, this is how you use it:

1) When the phasing player is ready to perform all the attacks by his eligible units on appropriate enemy units, he records the attacking units and their combat strength, the defending units and their defense strength and the odds ratio for each individual battle. All the battles for that turn are recorded in the manner agreed to by the PBMing players (before the game started), with each battle numbered to indicate the order in which they will be resolved. After each battle listing the phasing player will notate the "desired" die roll result that he wants for that particular battle. Though not really necessary, the player may wish to actually roll a die to get the die roll results, or he may use another convenient method. Also, if there are any Attacker and/or Defender Retreat results possible, the phasing player must also record the hexes that his attacking units will move back to if he should receive any Retreat results.

2) The list of battles compiled above is then mailed to the opponent (keeping a copy of the battle listings for reference purposes) on the agreed upon day of the week. On that same exact day the opponent (or non-phasing player) will mail a package of his own to the phasing player, which will be a list of column letters from the Result Track for that CRT, in the order that they will be used to resolve the battles. This list of Result Tracks is simply a rearrangement of the six letters heading the Result Track columns. The list of Results should probably be as much as twenty to thirty letters long, or at least long enough to correspond to the largest number of battles that the non-phasing player thinks will most likely be fought, with a little left over to act as a buffer. The non-phasing player should also keep a personal record of the Result Track lists he creates for each turn.

3) When the players receive each other's mailings they combine their two lists, consult the CRT and apply the results as necessary. The two lists are compared by matching the phasing player's desired die roll numbers with the non-phasing player's Result Track letters on the CRT and reading across to the appropriate odds ratio for that particular battle. If any die roll modifications (plus or minus) are required, simply go up or down the horizontal rows of the CRT to reach the modified result. The final cross referenced result is then applied to the combatting units immediately.

This procedure is best explained by the example below (using the generic CRT accompanying this article):

For game turn #3 of a hypothetical game the phasing player (player A) is making the following five attacks, which will be resolved in the order shown:

1. Armored divisions 3, 5 & 27 with 27 points are attacking infantry divisions 58 & 30 with 6 points. Odds Ratio - 4:1, die roll - 5
2. Mechanized divisions 12 & 26 with 18 points are attacking mechanized division 53 with 9 points. Odds Ratio - 2:1, die roll - 3. If retreat, move to hex 1734.
3. Infantry division 15 with 7 points is attacking infantry division 10 with 6 points. Odds Ratio - 1:1, die roll - 3. If retreat, move to hex 1018.
4. Mechanized divisions 7, 8 & 33 with 22 points are attacking infantry division 25 with 6 points. Odds Ratio - 3:1, die roll - 1. If retreat, move to hex 2544.
5. Armored division 17 and infantry division 70 with 19 points are attacking infantry division 7 with 8 points. Odds Ratio - 2:1, die roll - 6. If retreat, move to hex 2005.

This information is mailed to the non-phasing player.

On the very same day the non-phasing player (player B) mails a list of Result Track column letters to player A. Player B doesn't know how many attacks that player A will make, so he writes a list of fifteen letters, just to be on the safe side. That list is shown on the next page.

Result Tracks						Die Roll	Odds						
A	B	C	D	E	F		1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	AE	AE	AR	AR	BR	DR	DR
2	3	4	5	6	1	2	AE	AR	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR
3	4	5	6	1	2	3	AR	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR	DE
4	5	6	1	2	3	4	AR	AR	EX	EX	DR	DR	DE
5	6	1	2	3	4	5	AR	BR	EX	DR	DR	DE	DE
6	1	2	3	4	5	6	AR	BR	DR	DR	DR	DE	DE

Chart 2: CRT after PBM modification

Game turn #3 attacks:
C/E/B/C/A/F/F/D/E/B/C/A/
A/F/B

This list is mailed to the phasing player.

When the players receive each other's mailings they match up the phasing player's desired die rolls for each attack with the non-phasing player's corresponding Result Track letters. The above example attacks would be resolved in the following manner:

For attack #1, the odds ratio was 4:1 with a desired die roll of 5. The first Result Track letter was C, so a roll of 5 on the C column cross references with 4:1 odds to give a result of DR, Defender Retreat.

For attack #2, the odds ratio was 2:1 with a die roll of 3. The second Result Track letter was an E, so a roll of 3 on the E column cross references with 2:1 odds to give another Defender Retreat result.

Attack #3 is done at 1:1 odds, a die roll of 3 and a Result Track letter of B. The cross referenced result is AR, Attacker Retreat. (The attacking unit is retreated back to hex 1018 as notated in the instructions.)

Attack #4 is done at 3:1 odds, a die roll of 1 and a Result Track letter of C. The result of this battle is Defender Retreat again.

And finally, attack #5 is done at 2:1 odds with a die roll of 6 and a Result

Track letter of A. This gives a result of Defender Retreat.

For this hypothetical game, player A's offensive on the third turn seems to be going quite well, with just one minor setback. When player B becomes the new phasing player he will tell his opponent to which hexes his retreating defending units were moved as a result of turn #3 attacks and then continue with the game.

This procedure is followed from turn to turn throughout the game as the players alternate attacking each other. It is an ideal method to create "virtual" random die rolls because the simultaneous nature of the two mailings, with one player picking a range of "desired" die rolls for his attacks and the other making a list of different result columns, means that neither player knows what choices the other has picked. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, this method does not work for every combat system, only for those which employ a CRT with a standard range of numbers to roll. But since the vast majority of board games use a standard CRT, this can be used for a large number of games. I hope this opens up a wider range of gaming possibilities for those of us who are forced to do our gaming by mail and wire. □

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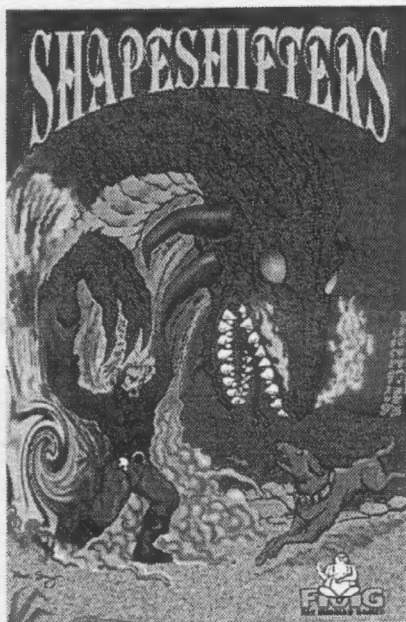
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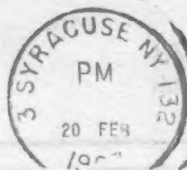
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EDITORIAL

(continued from page 1)

I roughly estimate that there were probably at least a couple hundred (or more!) SF board games published in the '70s and '80s. If that's true then we have several years worth of gaming to catch up on before we start clamoring for more new games. This brings me full circle to the reason for publishing VINDICATOR, that of actively supporting the old, out-of-print SF & F board games so that we can all get many more years of enjoyment out of them. Whether anyone ever publishes another science fiction board game or not is immaterial. I intend to use VINDICATOR to explore all the myriad possibilities that exist for the games we have now. It's time to dismiss all the cataclysmic predictions and get back to serious game playing. Leave the end-of-the-world stuff to the tabloids. □

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